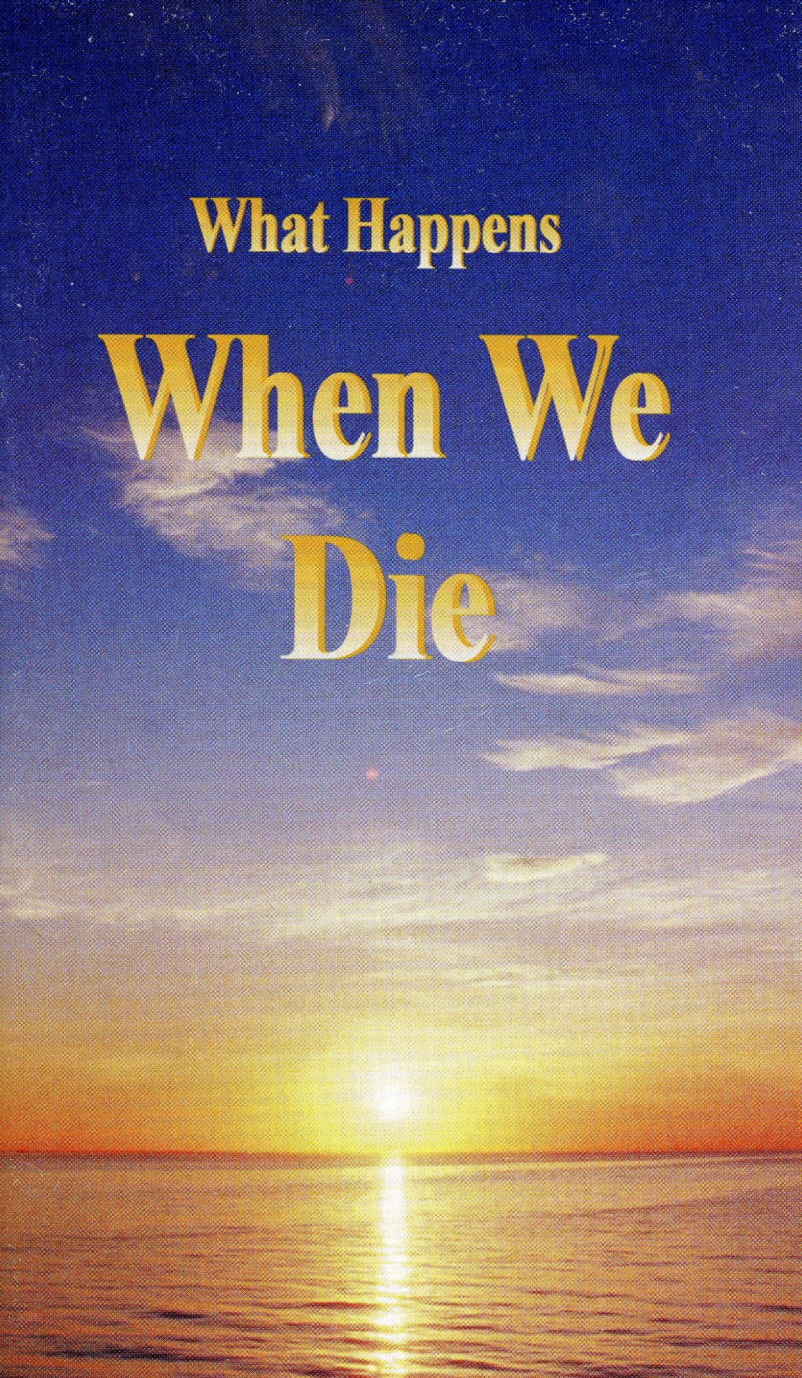
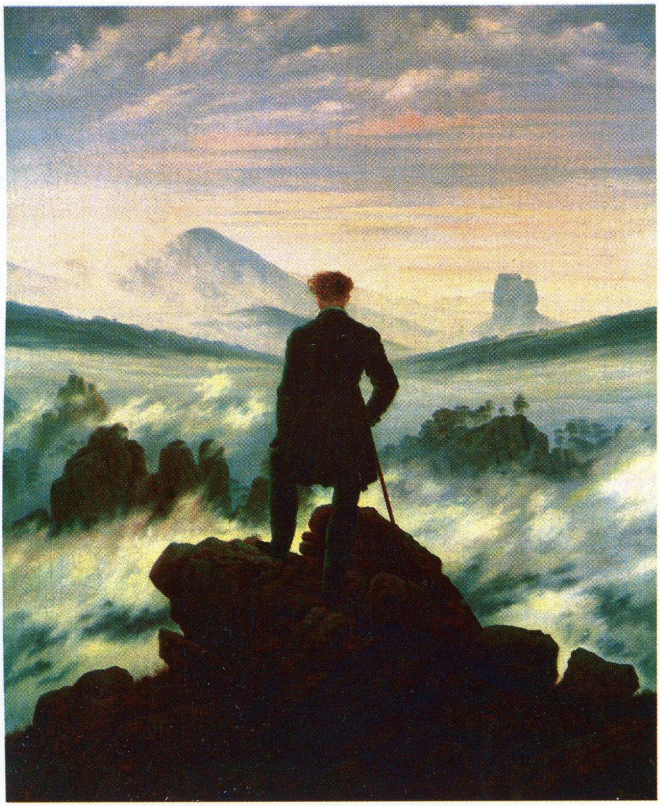
What Happens When We Die





"There is a road, steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind, but yet a road, and it leads to the heart of the Universe...for those who win onwards there is reward past all telling - the power to bless and save humanity; for those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come."

H.P.Blavatsky

INTRODUCTION

It is generally assumed that very little is known about what happens to us when we die. Though much has been written in the past on the subject of death, it is mostly either allegorical or speculative. All religions give accounts of events following death but they are usually not specific and do not stand up to careful investigation. Spiritualism also gives a fragmented story of the post-mortem journey, which relies mainly on information received through mediums. These accounts vary according to the experience of each 'spirit'. They lack consistency in important details. Scientists, with the exception of a few who have investigated spiritualistic phenomena, have not seriously attempted to penetrate the veil.

Throughout history there has been a tradition of a secret knowledge, hidden in folk lore, fairy stories and philosophical and even religious books. This ancient wisdom has been preserved by thinkers and teachers throughout the ages. Examples of the greatest of these custodians are Krishna, Hermes, Zoroaster, Jesus and particularly the Buddha. Much of this wisdom, when it came to be made known, threatened the institutional orthodoxy of its day. Its proponents were persecuted and it went 'underground'. This protected not only the 'knowers' but also the knowledge from those who would misinterpret and misuse it.

In the late 19th century this wisdom re-emerged. It was re-presented by a Russian mystic and author, Madame

Helena Blavatsky. She not only introduced much of this ancient religious philosophy to the West, weaving together its myriad threads in her writings, but also added some esoteric truths, parts of which formed the ancient, arcane, ageless teachings, never before made public. The aggregate of her writings constituted the foundations of modern Theosophy.

Initiates in the Arcane Sciences, now called Adepts, or Masters of the Wisdom, inspired her immense literary outpourings, and within this vast wealth of teachings is a comprehensive and detailed account of what happens when we die.

> *'To die: to sleep, ...*
> *No more; and, by a sleep to say we end*
> *The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks*
> *That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation*
> *Devoutly to be wish'd. To die: to sleep;*
> *To sleep! Perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;*
> *For in that sleep of death what dreams may come:*
> *When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,*
> *Must give us pause: ...'*
>
> —*Hamlet,* by William Shakespeare

In the West death is generally regarded as the end of all we know and are; it is final; there is nothing beyond. Although the Spiritualist movement has done much in recent times to encourage belief in the existence of an after-life of some kind, this relies on the evidence of entities 'on the other side' who have survived the grave. These messages may be acceptable to the masses

of people but for the thinker they do little to dispel the darkness and fear which has surrounded the subject of death for many centuries, especially in the West.

The views of the spiritualists, however, differ greatly from the teachings of the Masters on this subject. The knowledge of the latter extends far beyond the early stages of the after-death process. They put dying into its spiritual context, showing that it is not the end of everything, that Man is a complex being made up of many parts, and that each of us has a continuing higher Ego which survives death, taking on many physical incarnations as part of its spiritual evolution.

The claims put forward here are related to the inner subjective realms of being. They explain by stages the whole process, itself subject to universal law. Against that background, death and the after-death states can be seen as part of the whole scheme of Nature herself.

Life, death,... death, life; the words have led for ages
Our thought and consciousness and firmly seemed
Two opposites; but now long-hidden pages
Are opened, liberating truths undreamed.
Life only is, or death is life disguised, ...
Life a short death until by life we are surprised.

—by Sri Aurobindo

* * *

WHAT ARE WE?

It is a tenet of the Esoteric Science that nothing lasts for ever; living forms die but something of them persists afterwards in the inner worlds. The process is continuing and universal, and connects together the life of all ephemeral entities that come and go, including our human physical existences. In other words, there is a persisting part of us that is virtually immortal, on an endless evolutionary journey. This is not what we usually think of as us, our physical bodies and our personalities, but an enduring part of ourselves we shall now call spiritual or divine.

In order to understand this universal process as it applies to us, we must first understand what we, as total beings, are.

Every person is a composite being with, it is said, seven constituent aspects or principles. The basic constitution of Man, as described by St Paul, is *body, soul and spirit*, but in Esotericism these are further divided to make seven. The occult philosophy tells us that consciousness must have a vehicle through which to operate. Each of our principles is actually or potentially such a vehicle, but during earth life all our subjective activities are normally centered in the physical brain.

We know that everything surrounding us is composed of physical matter in three states: solid, liquid and gas. We are aware of these through our physical senses, which can however receive only those messages from the outside world to which they can respond, namely

the objective physical world: but there are others of an increasingly ethereal nature the more spiritual they become. For example, just because one listens to AM on the radio, it does not mean that programmes on FM, long wave and medium wave are not being transmitted. In other words, the fact that we are normally unaware of something does not mean that it does not exist...we are just not 'tuned in' to receive what is being 'broadcast' on other wavelengths.

There are, as already mentioned, levels other than the physical. One of these, closely associated with the physical, is that of *life energy*, the *life force*, which is essential to all living organisms. This manifests in the *physical body* via a special vehicle or principle known as the *astral body*. These three, the life force (*prana* in Eastern terms), the *astral body* (*linga sarira*) and the *physical body*, are known as the *lower triad.*

Apart from these three we have feelings, emotions like anger and love, which in themselves are not physical but subjective, inner. Similarly we can use imagination, we can reason, think and so on. While our minds are distinct areas of consciousness, though separate from our emotions, they are closely related.

So to the physical we must add *emotional* and *mental* vehicles. These two aspects of man's being are vehicles of consciousness at their respective levels; together they are often referred to as the *middle duad* and comprise the *mortal soul*. With the *lower triad* they constitute the whole man as we know him in incarnation and are specifically called the *Personality.*

The *mental* principle or vehicle responsible for our thought processes can be regarded as divided into a *lower* and *higher mind*. Memory, imagination, and logical thinking, the normal mundane mental activities, are considered as of the *lower mind*. The *higher mind* activities are those including, for example, spontaneous 'common sense', abstract thought and ideas, creativity, and conscience.

The middle duad together with the body constitutes the *personality* referred to above. The *higher mind*, more concerned with broad principles and abstracts, is where the human consciousness of 'I am I' arises. Together with two even higher, spiritual principles, Spirit proper and its vehicle (*Atma* and *Buddhi* in Eastern terms), *higher mind* constitutes the *upper triad*, commonly referred to as the *Ego*, the *Individuality* (as opposed to the *Personality*), the divine Self, called the immortal Soul, because it is virtually identical with the ONE SELF of the Universe. It is the Individuality, not the Personality, which persists and reincarnates through our long series of personal lives.

Spirit (*Atma*) is the ultimate dynamism of all life, operating in a totally distinctive way in all things depending on their nature, characteristics and functions. Its vehicle (*Buddhi*) is the seat of intuition – direct knowing – and of our highest spiritual aspirations. Yet regardless of all these aspects of his constitution, man is always a unity...one Being.

* * *

THE LAW

Although that which is behind the universal process is continuous, everlasting and unchanging, in the process itself every thing in existence at any time is transient.

Nothing whatsoever in the whole Cosmos, neither worlds nor men nor the tiniest conceivable things, no event, no time period, no process lasts forever. Everything is subject to change. Everything comes and goes. Although the universal process is continuous, everlasting and unchanging, every thing in existence at any time within the process, whether it exists for a fraction of a second or millennia, is temporary.

The manifest universe is One Being which, however, is always progressively changing. There is no such thing as dead matter. Life is inherent in all things, from the smallest atom to the largest heavenly body. The human body is composed of a vast number of atoms, molecules and cells, all lives collectively sustaining a single life, in man a unit of consciousness. The nature of forms, and their behaviour, is determined by directly related past causes. The combined behaviour of all things in Nature constitutes a total process, the way Nature works: it is the Universal Law, known as *Karma*.

The after-death processes are in accordance with this Law which has a number of aspects: one is alternation or cycles, another is cause and effect. Death and rebirth alternate as part of the cyclic process. What happens to each of us is determined by what we do in life. The Law also conditions our next and subsequent lives. It deter-

mines the type of physical body, family environment, opportunities and hardships, we will all have in life. While we are alive we are continually modifying aspects of our inherent nature. At death the essence of those aspects – known as *skandhas* – remains in the inner worlds to determine our next life character.

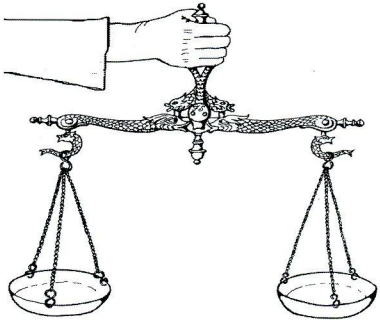
These skandhas become effective on the birth of the new body into the physical world where all the causes of Karma are generated. So the new personality cannot escape the consequences of sins, voluntary and involuntary, of the old one. Even though the new personality cannot usually remember the deeds or misdeeds of the old one, the memory of all our lives does return to the Ego at major intervals in its long spiritual journey to perfection and freedom.

Perhaps the best description of Karma is in Madame Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy:*

> *'Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, karma is that unseen and unknown law which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself unknowable, its action is perceivable.'*

Karma means action. The whole universe demonstrates an inherently regulated process in action. The Law

keeps the Universe in equilibrium; without it planets would fly off their courses and chaos would reign. Karma represents an entry book into which all the thoughts and deeds of mankind individually and collectively, good, bad or indifferent, are recorded, as debit or credit. Not only do individuals get their deserts, but so do families, groups and nations; even humanity as a whole.



The past wholly conditions the present but within that constraint man has freedom of choice. He can decide in most circumstances what he will do. Having done it, however, he must take the consequences.

Our human living and dying and inter-life states must be seen against the background of the whole universal process, of which indeed they form an integral part. The Law as it applies to the universe, applies to man. The alternating cycles of rest and activity are models for what happens to each of us in life and in death.

* * *

AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH

At the moment of death the life force withdraws from the body, which then ceases to act as a co-ordinated whole. The individual cells of the body, however, do not die immediately but the supply of blood to them ceases. They therefore no longer receive essential nutrients, nor are their waste products washed away. The processes of putrefaction set in and the body slowly decomposes. It disintegrates, together with the astral body, or double as it is sometimes called, and the life force is freed and returns to the 'ocean' of life energy from which it came.

Up to the moment of death the body housed a tenant, a unit of conscious life, but immediately after the withdrawal of the life force, the tenant leaves forever and unconsciousness closes in. However, without knowledge of the continuity of life after life, too often man has shown resentment against what should be gentle and fearless subsiding into death.

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sung the sun in flight
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

—By Dylan Thomas

◆

What actually occurs at death has been explained by one of the Masters of the Wisdom in some detail:

'Speak in whispers, ye, who assist at a death-bed, and find yourselves in the presence of Death. Especially have you to keep quiet just after Death has laid her clammy hand upon the body. Speak in whispers, I say, lest you disturb the quiet ripple of thought, and hinder the busy work of the Past casting its reflection upon the Veil of the Future.

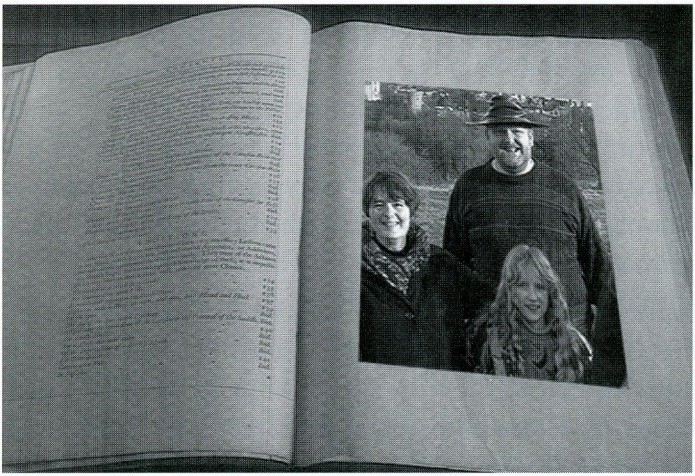
'At the solemn moment of death, every man, even when death is sudden, sees the whole of his past life marshalled before him, in its minutest details. For one short instant the person becomes one with the individual and all-knowing Ego. But this instant is enough to show him the whole chain of

causes which have been at work during his life. He sees and now understands himself as he is, unadorned by flattery or self-deception. He reads his life, remaining as a spectator looking down into the arena he is quitting; he feels and knows the justice of all the suffering that has overtaken him.'

The Masters' teaching is that we recall every detail of our life at the moment of death when the dying brain dislodges all its memories. This is an involuntary process. After death all action of the brain ceases. It dies and then follows the death of its counterpart in the astral body. The deceased now has no more direct contact with the physical world, and all the visions and feelings of the pre-death state cease.

The fact of the review of the life just past is confirmed by those who have been resuscitated from drowning, from severe wounds or from being close to death for any other reason. Another common factor in most near-death experiences, is the meeting of an obstacle, or the passage through a tunnel towards a light, with the impression that if the obstacle were surmounted or the light were reached there would be no return: death proper would have taken place. Those near death reported that they enjoyed a sense of great peace and happiness. Often they did not want to return to earth life. Some, however, felt they had to return for the sake of their family or other duty or obligation. Many of them were radically changed by the experience. They had seen a purpose in life, and stressed that love was essential in all relationships.

When old people are near death they often report being in beautiful surroundings, such as a garden, where they see loved ones apparently waiting to greet them at their passing. This can also be the case in the near death experience.



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SEPARATING CREAM FROM MILK

After the death of the physical body there are several distinct phases in the post-mortem process. The early stage involves a sorting out of results of our passions and mental experiences. The higher spiritual ones are assimilated into the immortal Soul (Ego) while the lower leave behind as a residue the personal psychic tendencies and predispositions, the skandhas, which determine the character of the new being and the conditions of the next life. In this way, the new being is 'rewarded' and 'punished' for the meritorious acts and misdeeds of the previous life. This is Karma.

Immediately after death consciousness ceases; the natural post mortem processes then start. These involve the inner principles, the middle duad and the upper triad. As we have seen, the physical and astral bodies disintegrate and the life principle flows away. The passional and lower mental principles of the *personal* man are left intact and still conjoined to the Ego (the *Individuality*). A process of separation of the lower personal from the higher spiritual content of the past life then takes place. This is known as the 'death struggle' in esoteric literature.

Most people are largely self-centred, subject to a mixture of urges, ambitions, loves, hates, indulgences, all with their strengths and weaknesses. Some possess the higher qualities of unselfishness or altruism. Whatever we give expression to during our lives is recorded as part of the activities of that life. All our life's experi-

ences are subject to the after-death sorting process which separates the purely spiritual from the selfish or non-spiritual elements. It is like separating spiritual 'cream' from the milk of ordinary personal experience. The baser, non-spiritual aspects, are always only milk: the Ego can assimilate only the 'cream'. When the separation is finished the personal psychic vehicles , the middle duad, are left behind while the Egoic triad – the truly spiritual man, – together with the 'cream' proceeds to the next phase.

In time, normally after a few years, the personal lower elements, the middle duad, also disintegrate, leaving their skandhas behind. This residue then goes dormant – into cold store so to speak – until it is revived at the onset of the next incarnation to condition the 'soul' of the new person to be, the Ego's next life on earth.

Anticipating the rest of our account the table overleaf shows each stage of the after-death period, from death to rebirth. Each stage is briefly described. The table can usefully be referred to during the study of each chapter. It puts their contents into the setting of the complete after-death journey. It is important to notice that no *personality* – except in exceedingly rare special cases – ever reincarnates. Each incarnation is distinct from those before it and those after it but it is conditioned by the previous one. Each life is as a causative link in a long chain, the Egoic chain, of many, many lives.

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Stage	*State and Process*	*Notes*
Dying	Memory dislodges from physical brain. Review of past life.	No possibility of an Ego, other than a premature death, communicating with the living, even through a medium, during this period.
Just After Death	Person unconscious; the three lower principles abandoned. Loss of perceptive faculties forever; loss of spiritual powers of cognition and volition for the time being. (The Mayavi-Rupa may appear to loved ones.)	
Death "struggle"	Person, normally unconscious, in Kama Loka, in earth's atmosphere. Struggle develops between fourth and fifth principles for spiritual content of past-life experience.	
Gestation	Assimilation of spiritual content by Ego (upper fifth, sixth, and seventh principles) - Ego and person unconcious.	
Entry into Devachan	Second review of previous life. Fourth and Fifth principles sloughed off to become "shell." Consciousness slowly returns to Ego. A dim consciousness and personal memory returns to "shell."	
Devachan	Ego now conscious again. Subjective dream-like state. All scenes, population and activities are as the person would have most liked them. Ego knows nothing of what is happening on earth. Person "en rapport" with Devachanee can, by raising his consciousness, feel himself to be communicating with him.	
Rebirth	Ego relapses into unconsciousness but glimpses, before rebirth, the main tenor of the life to come. New astral body and middle principles formed, conditioned by Skandhas. New personlity and environment determined by Karma. Skandhas cannot be altered after death (the world of effects) except premature deaths via mediums.	

THE PLACE OF PASSION AND DESIRE (THE KAMA-LOCA)

Kama-Loca is the Hades of the ancient Greeks, the Amenti of the Egyptians: it is the post mortem region where the astral bodies or 'shells' (the middle duad) remain until they fade away after the exhaustion of the emotional-cum-mental impulses that created them. These 'shells' are psychic corpses with a lingering, but fading residual life. While this life lasts they can be effective through a medium in a seance room. The 'shells' form only after the death of the physical body.

When the 'death struggle' is over these separated kamic elements, or 'milk', constitute the temporarily surviving elements of the personal soul. They retain the late personality's memories and idiosyncracies. It is the nature and quality of the earthly desires of the person while alive that determine its experiences and the duration of its stay, (normally unconscious,) in Kama-Loca, but see later for exceptions to the rule.

The Master describes the death struggle as follows:

> *'Thus when man dies, his "Soul" becomes unconscious and loses all remembrance of things internal as well as external. Whether his stay in Kama-Loca has to last but a few moments, hours, days, weeks, months or years; whether he died a natural or a violent death' whether it occurred in his young or old age, and whether the Ego was good, bad or indifferent, – his consciousness*

leaves him as suddenly as the flame leaves the wick, when blown out. When life has retired from the last particle in the brain matter, his perceptive faculties become extinct forever, his spiritual powers of cognition and volition – (all those faculties in short, which are neither inherent in, nor acquirable by, organic matter) – for the time being.'

A period of 'gestation' follows the 'death struggle' when the spiritual content (the cream) of the previous life's experiences are assimilated by the Ego before its emergence into Devachan, the next after-death stage.

Shells are known technically as Kama-Rupas (rupa = form). Sometimes they are known as Elementaries (as distinct from Elementals), the psychic remains of the deceased after the spiritual Ego has separated from them and withdrawn.

* * *

THE STATE OF BLISS (DEVACHAN)

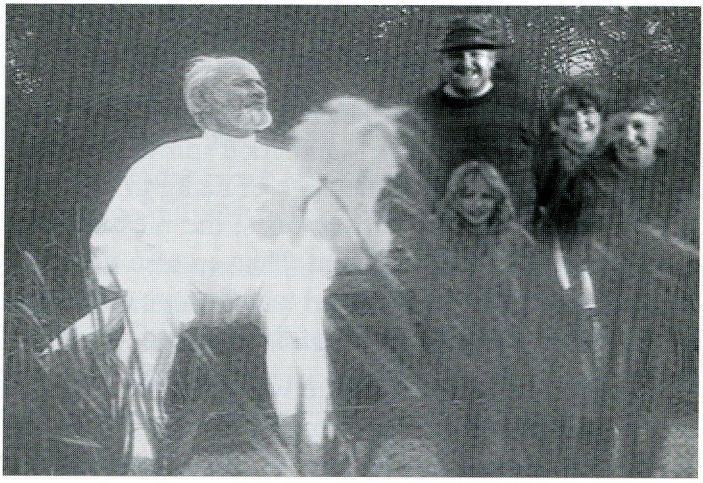
Devachan means 'the place of the gods'. It is the blissful state that the Ego enjoys after the death struggle and gestation. This state is similar to the Hindu's Svarga, the Moslem's Paradise or the Christian's Heaven, but is not an actual equivalent of them.

The common concept of heaven is the dwelling place of God, inhabited by angels and good spirits. It is often thought of as the home, the state of being in the afterlife, of the saved, the chosen ones, the blessed, after some form of a last judgment. Heaven also describes the celestial spheres in contrast to either life on earth or to the underworld, the place of the damned.

Devachan is a subjective state wholly conditioned by the spiritual content of the immediate past life on Earth. It is also a 'personalized' state. Without some element of the late person's mind, the Ego would have no sense of identity. The personalized Ego is rewarded in Devachan for its unselfishness on Earth. It is a state of intense 'self-ness', with no pain, no sadness to darken its light and happiness.

The Masters tell us that we create our own Devachan, mostly during the last days, or even moments, of our intellectual, sentient lives. For each of us it is like a perfect dream, but one that is for us reality in which we create for ourselves all we wish to see and do and have with us all those we have loved. We cannot, however,

actually see or contact our loved ones on Earth. With the death of our physical body and the disintegration of our astral body we have no means of doing so. We are not aware of anything they may be suffering as a result of our death, nor of anything affecting their circumstances there.



In the devachanic states there are as many varieties of bliss as on Earth: as many shades, forms, colour and sound, and also as many levels of ability to perceive and appreciate them.

As in physical earth life there is for the Ego in Devachan a life-cycle, beginning with a 'birth' and emergence into Devachan, with a slow return of consciousness together with a momentary but intense and detailed remembrance of the past life. This is followed by maturity, full awareness, and then a slow decline, not into death but rebirth as a baby into a new earth life.

'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Has had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!'

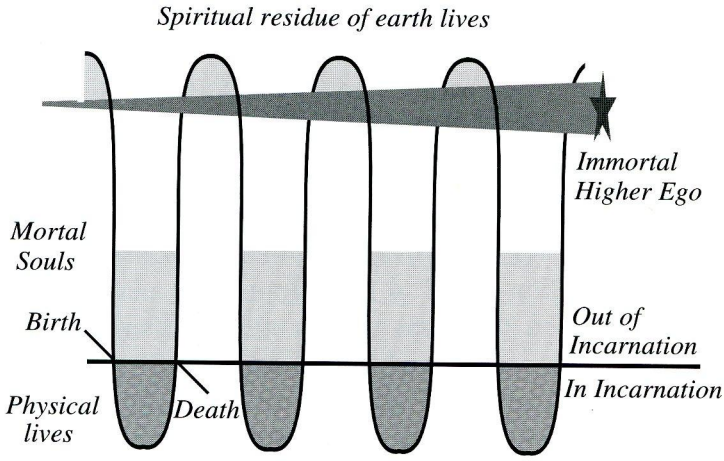
—from *Intimations of Mortality*,
by William Wordsworth

* * *

RESURRECTION OR REBIRTH

We come into our new life with all the main elements of our character already formed according to the perfectly just law of Karma. We really are what we have made ourselves – and inevitably we will become what we are now making of ourselves.

The sudden onset of unconsciousness at death normally persists through Kama-Loca until our awakening in Devachan with its blissful and vividly real 'dreams'. Then after a due period, determined by the spiritual stamina of the Ego, there is a relapse into unconsciousness: but it is said that just prior to our rebirth we have a pre-vision of the main current of our new life to come. We eventually wake again as an infant into whatever that new life has in store for us.



The processes of rebirth are the same as those after death but in reverse order. The Ego initiates the rebirth process by revivifying the middle principles of the new personality-to-be together with its conditioning skandhas. A new model-body (the astral) is then formed – also similarly conditioned. This is quickened by life force (prana) and the whole complex guided to a mother-to-be who has karmic links with the incipient child. The normal processes of physical nature then take their course.

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ACCIDENTS AND SUICIDES

The account of the after-death states just given applies to a normal case of a person dying, in due course, of natural causes. There are exceptions: those who die prematurely, before their karma-allotted time. They have therefore to live out in Kama-Loca what should have been their natural life-span. These exceptions include 'accidents'; which cover sudden death from such causes as earthquakes, cyclones and floods, as well as from wars, riots, vehicle crashes and so on. It is while they are in Kama-Loca, but before severance from their Egos, that they can communicate with relatives and friends left behind, through spiritualistic mediums.

Victims, whether good or bad, are not responsible for their deaths; even if the death was a retribution for actions in previous lives; it was not the direct result of an act deliberately committed. However, the average victim of an accident has after-death experiences different from those who die normally. The Masters give us this picture of their post mortem journey:

> *'Unhappy shades, if sinful and sensual they wander about – (not shells, for their connection with their two higher principles is not quite broken) – until their death-hour comes. Cut off in the full flush of earthly passions which bind them to familiar scenes, they are enticed by the opportunities afforded, to gratify themselves vicariously....*

'The victim whether good or bad is irresponsible for his death, even if his death were due to some action in a previous life or an antecedent birth: was an act, in short, of the Law of Retribution, still, it was not the direct result of an act deliberately committed by the personal ego of that life during which he happened to be killed.'

This gloomy picture of accidental death only applies to the very 'sinful and sensual'; the fate of the average victim is kinder. The good and innocent subject of an accident either slumbers surrounded by happy dreams or sleeps a profound sleep. There may be, however, some conscious realization that had the victims lived their life through to a natural end, they might have resolved some of the outstanding Karma and perhaps learned some control over the vices and passions of their lower nature. A shortened life means that the anticipated cycle of experience, learning and assimilation has not been completed, and this affects the post mortem states.

Suicides also have to remain in Kama-Loca up to the allotted time when they should have died. Their fate, however, can be much worse than the victims of accident. As they are themselves responsible for shortening their own life, they have interfered knowingly with the natural process of living and dying. Motive is everything...so the suicides' fate is very different from that of accident victims.

The Masters describe their experience as follows:

'Suicides can, and often do, communicate through mediums. The good and pure of them sleep a quiet and blissful sleep, full of happy visions of earth-life, and have no consciousness of being forever beyond that life. Those who were neither good nor bad will sleep a dreamless, quiet sleep; while the evil ones will, in proportion to their wickedness, suffer the horrors of a nightmare lasting years: their thoughts become living things, their involuntary passions – real substance, and they receive back on their heads all the misery they have heaped on others. Reality in fact would yield a far more terrible Inferno than even Dante had imagined!'

Those who try to escape their difficulties in life by killing themselves are only postponing issues, not resolving them. The Law will invariably provide another set of circumstances which their new personality will have to confront, maybe in even more difficult conditions. The workings of Karma are inevitable and inexorable.

Another major group of premature deaths is that of children dying young. As they have lived so short a time, their life experience may not justify a prolonged stay either in Kama-Loca or Devachan. Sometimes, though rarely, so little has been the experience that after death the psyche (or Kama-Manas) of the child is never separated from the immortal Ego. The child then returns with all its principles intact. These are the rare

cases of real *personal* reincarnation. Early deaths in childhood often result in a vivid memory in the next life of the past life, complete with many details (see cases investigated by Professor Stevenson).

The Masters have much to say about the dire consequences of mediums contacting victims of accident or suicides:

> *'It is a sin and cruelty to revive their memory and intensify their suffering by giving them a chance of living an artificial life; a chance to overload their Karma, by tempting them into open doors, viz. mediums and sensitives, for they will have to pay roundly for every such pleasure.'*

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LIFE'S PROGRESSIVE MARCH, EVOLUTION

Behind all created things there is an everlasting 'something', an absolute SOMETHING that always IS; while itself quite indescribable, even unknowable, it is the very essence of Existence. From it stems all life in every thing and being in the Cosmos. It is the root source of all creation, physical as well as subjective, all thought and sentience, all ideas and ideals. Just one of its magnificent aspects is universal memory wherein lies the master plan of all design and form in Nature; it contains the archetypes of all that is, was and ever will be.

The whole Cosmos is a Life, a living whole, and everything in it has and is life. As we have said, there is no dead matter. Everything, even what we call inorganic substance, has the dual aspects of form and energy, which are matter and life.

The whole universal life is a process of progressive change, the continual unfolding of the infinite potentialities of Spirit. Coincident with this unfolding is a process of ever-expanding consciousness as life moves up from one kingdom of Nature to the next (mineral to vegetable to animal and so on). Even planets and solar systems obey this law. They are all in the process of 'ever-becoming', evolving.

All development takes place from 'within to without', from the subjective realms to the objective, from the inner invisible realms to the outer visible physical ones.

The form of man's body, with the Heavenly Man as the archetype, exists timelessly in Cosmic Ideation. It is projected, from the highest spiritual subjective realms through several intermediate planes, to form a prototype of man as we know him, into the objective physical realm. This process began when the Earth was at an early stage of its development, when it was still ethereal, not physically dense as it is now. The model of Man pre-existed any physical manifestation even in the animal kingdom, at these inner levels. Man did not evolve on our planet as a result of a development from the mammalian kingdom, the apes. In this way he preceded them; he was here first!

The evolution of Man takes place on a series of levels, the physical body being the densest. Each level has its characteristic state of consciousness, all available even-

tually to man depending on his level of evolutionary development.

Madame Blavatsky wrote in *The Secret Doctrine,*

> *'Every atom has life in it, however latent and unconscious, and moreover, is a little universe endowed with some consciousness, hence with memory. Everything in the universe is alive; consciousness is contained within all matter; and both the seed, and the speck, must have the latent potentialities in them for the reproduction and gradual development, the unfolding of the thousand and one forms or phases of evolution.'*

Just as at the end of each day we are not quite the same as we were when we awoke, so at the end of each life, through experience, we have changed. As we have seen, our inner vehicles of consciousness also change as a result of our life experiences. Over many lives, as a result of the refining of the physical and inner vehicles, we are eventually able to function consciously on all levels. This causes corresponding changes in the lower vehicles and ultimately in the physical. This is the rationale of evolution.

As this refining proceeds, life after life, the 'cream' resulting from the gestation process becomes richer in quality and quantity. Further, as we progressively work out our karmic obligations in each incarnation, there are less and less earthly handicaps and obligations to bind us to the earthly existence, and a gradual move to a relative state of perfection is attained.

We are all ultimately responsible, in each of our individual lives, for this development of our immortal Selves. In this we are each a part of the evolutionary development not only of humanity but of all Nature herself. She too is on the road to perfection, stage by stage, to a fulfillment beyond our possible imagining.

The electron on which forms and worlds are built,
Leaped into being, a particle of God.
A spark from the eternal Energy split,
It is the Infinite's blind minute abode.

In that small flaming chariot Shiva rides.
The one devised innumerable to be;
His oneness in invisible forms he hides,
Time's tiny temples to eternity.

Atom and molecule in their unseen plan
Buttress an edifice of strange onenesses,
Crystal and plant, insect and beast and man,
Man on whom the World-unity shall seize,

Widening his soul spark to an epiphany
Of the timeless vastness of infinity.

"Electron" by Sri Aurobindo

* * *

SO WHERE DOES THE JOURNEY LEAD?

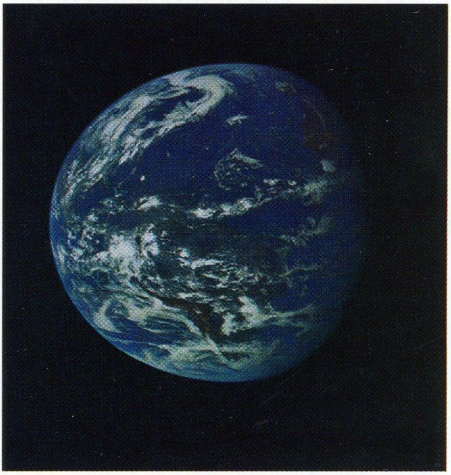
We cannot, with our ordinary minds, conceive of immortality in any real terms. It would have to be an existence of unbroken consciousness: not necessarily any consciousness we now understand, but one running without any breaks through eternity. However, all that lives – every entity – must obey the cyclic law with its constant beginnings and endings. Life as such is a vast, endless process. So each one of us, as an Ego, must and will have a series of periodical appearances as individual personalities, each playing its part for a time. Our appearances are on ever-ascending levels of being: first as infants, then increasing in maturity until we become members of a hierarchy composed of fully developed men. Eventually we join the company of those of super-human stature and come to share their vastly expanded consciousness. We are then quite free from the limitations of the lower personality and have no need to incarnate again.

It is from the imprisoning illusions we have of ourselves that we must eventually die in order to be born again in spirit, and enter Life unlimited, everlasting Reality itself.

With the knowledge that death is not an end, but a recurring link in a long chain of lives, we can review and perhaps change our attitude to our present lives, to our physical surroundings, to our relationships with

Nature herself and thereby to realise our inseperable affinity.

The ultimate survival of humanity depends on our co-operating not only with our immediate fellows but with mankind as a whole. Surely we must also have regard to the whole of creation, not just to that little piece of it that we feel to be our private concern, our minuscule corner of the Universe. This process has begun: many in the so-called developed countries are now turning their attention to the plight of the third world, to that of the animal kingdom, and even to the health of the planet as a whole.



There are causative realms behind the appearances of our outer world. These facts have long been with us as the Ageless Wisdom but we have not heeded them even if we have known them. We are still, in spite of our modern technologies, in the grip of ignorance and

superstition concerning the deep realities of our existence. A genuine knowledge, a real recognition of them must eventually bring a corresponding realization that our feelings towards our thoughts must affect and alter our relationships. Genuine creative thought and a kindly regard for all Nature must have its effect. Everything in Nature is a life, and each life has its own inner principles to which it can respond. We could work miracles in our environment just by loving it.

Our religions and orthodox academies still hold us to emotional ransom. Materialism is our god: life has become a relentless struggle to hold a place in our cruelly competitive society. The gratification of immediate desires seems to be the present day exclusive preoccupation, as though we have no higher purpose, nothing to inspire and move us to make the effort to self-improvement and service. Yet we can rise out of the morass of aimlessness into a more purposeful way of life, with a wider, glorious long-term outcome into a freedom undreamed of, if we heed the teaching. We all have the potential to reach a state of fulfillment and achievement:- and with the will to serve, each of us can speed to this, the ultimate goal for the whole of humanity.

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FURTHER READING

THE OCEAN OF THEOSOPHY by W.Q. Judge

THEOSOPHY, WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? by G.A. Farthing

EVERYONE'S GUIDE TO THEOSOPHY by H. Benjamin

TWELVE MANUALS OF THEOSOPHY by various authors

KARMA AND REBIRTH by C. Humphreys

THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY by H.P. Blavatsky. An outline of some aspects of the teachings in the form of questions and answers. Invaluable to the enquirer.

FOUNDATIONS OF ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY: A small compilation of the essential teachings extracted verbatim from the principal works of H.P. Blavatsky.

EXPLORING THE GREAT BEYOND by G.A. Farthing

WHEN WE DIE by G.A. Farthing

DEITY, COSMOS AND MAN by G.A. Farthing.

BIOGRAPHIES OF H.P. BLAVATSKY

THE REAL H.P. BLAVATSKY by William Kingsland

WHEN DAYLIGHT COMES by Howard Murphet

PERSONAL MEMOIRS OF H.P. BLAVATSKY by Mary Neff

REMINISCENCES OF H.P.B. & THE S.D. by C. Wachmeister

H.P.B.: IN MEMORY OF HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY BY SOME OF HER PUPILS

VIDEOS AND BOOKLETS

BLAVATSKY: A Drama Documentary (65 min. duration)

THEOSOPHY FOR EVERYONE: Documentary (50 min.)

WHEN WE DIE: Documentary (50 min.)

Further titles to follow.

It is usually assumed that very little is known about what really happens to us when we die. Religions have only vague versions of the after-death experience; science hasn't even scratched the surface of the subject. But there has in fact always existed a constant stream of hidden knowledge flowing through traditional, philosophical and sacred works. This ancient ageless wisdom, the teachings of the Masters or Mahatmas, re-emerged through the Russian mystic and author Helena Blavatsky. This knowledge places dying in its spiritual context, showing death is not an end; that we are complex beings, each having a continuing higher part which survives and takes on many physical incarnations.

Based on '*When We Die*' by Geoffrey Farthing, this book is a factual summary of these teachings, and explains what we are, where we are going, what ceases and what survives, precisely and concisely it shows what actually does happen to us

WHEN WE DIE.

The Blavatsky Trust
c/o The Theosophical Society In England,
50 Gloucester Place,
London WIH 4EA.
Total Running Time 52 mins